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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; US-ARGENTINE TIES; BOLIVIA-IRAN; 09/28/07

## 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Key international stories today include the current status of the US-Argentine bilateral relationship; and the risks and contradictions involved by hard positions, which are held by both Bolivian President Evo Morales and his opponents.

## 2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "The White House seeks ways to improve its ties (to Argentina)"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacisn," comments (09/28) "Nstor Kirchner's comments on the US were downplayed by the Bush administration, whose approach is 'temporary' - in the view of three sources from different areas of the USG, the (Argentine) President will only be in power two more months and everyone is looking ahead.

"One of the USG officials consulted said: 'Our purpose is not getting into trouble with President Kirchner about the past.' 'We will look ahead on bilateral ties in order to strengthen them.' 'The current government is coming to an end and everyone is expecting elections.'

"Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Shannon and his staff, just like their counterparts at the National Security Council believe that today, Senator Cristina Fernandez has 'high chances' of winning the presidency. However, they will be cautious in their manners.

"A USG source said: 'We do not know whether the US-Argentine relationship will change when Cristina takes power. They are 'selling' a more open image than that of Kirchner in terms of foreign relations and particularly with the US. But we will see.'

"A second USG source was pragmatic: 'We are not foolish. We know how they think and what they want. And we are interested in maintaining a positive relationship with Argentina, Mexico and Brazil.' Hugo Chavez is the goal to be reached among the four countries... 'Fox and Kirchner focused on their domestic agendas for different reasons, but now Argentina and Mexico are returning to regional diplomacy. And we have to help Argentina to get out of its dependence on Chavez.'

"What does the White House interpret when Kirchner complains that it abandoned (Argentina) in recent years? One of the USG sources said: '(The US interprets) that he wants the US to play a more active role in favor of Argentina on Paris Club debt, the Falklands/Malvinas issue and other topics.'

"US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took (Kirchner's) remarks with a mixture of surprise and irritation. A USG officer said: 'She is a friend of Anne Krueger and in the worst point of the Argentine

crisis she was one of those who used to call Krueger to meddle in favor of Argentina at the IMF. And now Kirchner says these things.'"

- "The (Argentine) President criticizes the US and there is again malaise in Washington"

Ana Barsn, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarn," comments (09/28) "On the eve of the meeting between FM Jorge Taiana and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, President Kirchner 'kicked the board' by lashing out at the Bush administration, whom he accused of not having 'accompanied Argentina during recent years.'"

"... These kinds of statements cannot be anything but a slam on (Secretary of State) Condoleezza Rice's face. During a recent press conference, Rice said 'When Argentina was in trouble some years ago, the US interfered at the IMF to support Argentina to help it reach a deal and not once but many times.'"

"However, everything indicates that Kirchner believes that the Bush administration is practically over and he is betting on a Democratic successor, more specifically on Hillary Clinton..."

"Why did Kirchner decide to be so aggressive just before (FM Taiana's) meeting with Rice? A member of the Argentine delegation said: 'The president was not tough with the US, but with Republicans. Didn't you see that he was much applauded?'"

"In fact, most attendees to the Clinton Global Initiative are Democrats."

"... The truth is that in the event Cristina Kirchner wins the presidency, she will have to co-exist with Bush for more than one year, in which Argentina will attempt to settle its Paris Club debt."

- "US-Argentine relationship remains a pendulum"

Jorge Sosa, on special assignment in New York for business-financial "El Cronista," writes (09/28) "(Secretary of State) Condoleezza Rice will meet with her Argentine counterpart, FM Jorge Taiana. Just as a warm-up, Kirchner himself surprisingly claimed that the US should pay more attention to and be more understanding with Latin America, and particularly with Argentina, highlighting that 'we have not felt accompanied by the US during recent years...'"

"... While the Argentine Government does not admit to it, it can be said that the bilateral agenda should be rebuilt after the back and forth moves it had, regardless of the topics where there is consensus, such as security and anti-money laundering cooperation. Washington (where just a few doubt that Cristina will win the presidency) is particularly interested in preventing the US-Argentine relationship from having new 'short-circuits.'"

"... The Bush administration is focused on limiting the region's approach to Iran, which is supported by Chavez alignment with the country. In this regard, Kirchner's speech was positively seen... For now, the Kirchnerism maintains its 'not-too-close not-too-far-from-the-White-House' posture. That message meant that the Government will not support an eventual military attack against Iran, a hot issue these days, and which they think Condoleezza Rice could raise in her meeting with Taiana today."

- "Risks and contradictions"

Hinde Pomeranec, international columnist of leading "Clarn," comments (09/28) "These days, curious questionings have been heard in Bolivia when the opposition accused President Evo Morales of acting as a puppet of Venezuelan Hugo Chavez regarding his ties to Iran. Those questionings are curious because the opposition itself has for decades followed the US dictates on the fate of Bolivia..."

"Rigid postures involve risks and contradictions. This is demonstrated by Evo's affectionate greeting to an ultraconservative political leader like Ahmadinejad, whom he called 'revolutionary buddy' only because both are on the same side against a common enemy - the US."

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